

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE
EDINA HERITAGE PRESERVATION BOARD
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2007, AT 7:00 P.M.
EDINA CITY HALL – COMMUNITY ROOM
4801 WEST 50TH STREET**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Bob Kojetin, Chris Rofidal, Lou Blemaster, Connie Fukuda, Jean Rehkamp Larson, Nancy Sherer, and Sara Rubin

MEMBERS ABSENT: Laura Benson, Karen Ferrara

STAFF PRESENT: Joyce Repya, Associate Planner

OTHERS PRESENT: Robert Vogel, Preservation Consultant
Wayne Houle, City Engineer
Jesse Struve, Utility Engineer
Paul Pasko, Short Elliott Hendrickson - SEH (utility consultant)
Mike Kotila, Short Elliott Hendrickson - SEH (traffic consultant)
Veronica Anderson, Short Elliott Hendrickson – SEH (land-
scape consultant)

I. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES: October 9, 2007

Member Blemaster moved approval of the Minutes from the October 9, 2007 meeting. Member Fukuda seconded the motion. All voted aye. The motion carried.

II. CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS:

1. H-07-10 Country Club Area Sewer, Water and Safety Reconstruction Improvements

Planner Repya reminded the Board that at the October HPB meeting a preliminary plan was presented for review. It was agreed that the proposed plan addressed the needs for both upgrading the utility services and improving traffic and pedestrian safety.

Questions were raised relative to the amount and type of signage required for the traffic improvements and the crosswalk design and materials.

According to City Engineer Wayne Houle, under usual circumstances, the City is required to follow "The Minnesota Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices." The manual would require a minimum of four signs per speed hump and up to seven signs for a set of two speed humps. Because the Country Club District is

designated a local historic district, and addressing the Board's concerns regarding the proliferation of signs, staff recommends a deviation from the manual with an entrance sign be placed at the perimeter of the neighborhood to warn of the traffic control devices that are found within the neighborhood. Such signs would be located on the south ends of Arden, Bruce, Casco, Wooddale and Browndale Avenues; the north ends of Browndale and Wooddale Avenues; and the east entrance to the district on Sunnyside Road. Engineer Houle has consulted the City Attorney, Roger Knutson regarding the proposed deviation from the manual. Mr. Knutson recommended that if the proposed deviations were to be implemented, it would be important to have findings of fact for justification.

Addressing the crosswalks, Ms. Repya explained that they are shown in a running bond brick pattern edged with concrete bands with the intent of using traditional clay bricks in a blend of earthen tone colors.

Due to the complexity of the street alignments, many of the intersections and sidewalks do not conform to a 90 degree rule. The goal of the proposed plan works toward minimizing the hard surface area at the corners while providing safe and legible pedestrian crossings. Curving the sidewalks at the corners and adding or retaining lawn panels will promote a softened edge.

Engineer Houle advised the Board that the Edina Bike Task Force has identified Wooddale Avenue as a primary bike route. Staff is not recommending additional modifications be made to Wooddale Avenue other than those indicated on the proposed plan. However, a "share the road" approach with proper signage in place should be implemented with this plan.

Planner Repya concluded that the proposed plans demonstrate that no significant heritage resources are to be destroyed or removed. Furthermore, the engineers have done a very good job designing safety improvement measures that require minimum alteration to the district's built environment and meet the criteria set out in the "Guidelines for Public Works Projects".

Staff recommended approval of the requested Certificate of Appropriateness for the proposed sewer, water and street reconstruction improvements to the historic Country Club District subject to the plans presented.

Consultants for Short Elliott and Hendrickson (SEH), Paul Pasko, Mike Kotila, and Veronica Anderson reviewed the proposed plan as it would be presented at the upcoming neighborhood open house. Ms. Anderson elaborated on the corner/crosswalk treatments as well as the proposed median for Wooddale Avenue north of W. 50th Street.

Ms. Anderson pointed out that the general design intent for the streetscape and landscape elements for the Country Club District project was based in part on the intricate and richly diverse material patterns found on house facades, masonry

work and pavement treatments within the district. Ms. Anderson added that as a result of researching the work of the landscape firm believed to have contributed to the Country Club Development (Arthur Nichols and Anthony Morrell), the proposed design of the a brick, stone, and concrete column, a major feature in the gateway median at Woodale Avenue and 50th Street was created.

Board members discussed many of the details of the plan including the sign proposed for the entry monuments and the colors to be used on the entrance signs. It was agreed that Staff would make the final decisions regarding the signs.

Member Blemaster complimented the consultants on the proposal, stating that she appreciated their research into the history of the neighborhood that is obvious in the plan.

Collectively, the Board thanked SEH for listening to the concerns they expressed at the initial meeting in October. It was agreed that the proposal addressed all the questions they had raised.

Member Rehkamp Larson then moved approval of the Certificate of Appropriateness for the Country Club area sewer, water and safety reconstruction improvements. Member Blemaster seconded the motion. All voted aye. The motion carried.

III. COUNTRY CLUB DISTRICT:

A. Survey Progress Report – October

Consultant Vogel explained that work continued on updating and reorganizing the inventory of heritage resources in the Country Club District. The field survey was about 75% completed by the end of the month. A good deal of consultant time was devoted to reviewing the proposed traffic safety study improvements (the subject of a COA application to be acted on at the November 13 HPB meeting) and preparing for the HPB's Country Club workshop on November 5.

During October, the survey also began to focus more intensively on historic landscape resources in the Country Club District. Historic landscape features generally fall into one of two heritage resource categories:

- 1) Designed landscapes – Landscapes designed by professional or amateur landscape architects, horticulturalists, or civil engineers using a recognized style or tradition; or
- 2) Urban cultural landscapes – Geographical areas that have been historically used by people, or shaped or modified by historical processes

of land use, and that retain visual characteristics indicative of such processes.

To be considered a heritage resource, a landscape must be at least 50 years old and have a well documented historical association with the broad pattern of residential development in the Country Club District.

Some of the types of landscape features found in the District:

- Pattern of spatial organization (platted subdivisions, property lot lines)
- Boundary demarcations (lot lines, fenced yards, hedges)
- Public parks & open spaces (Browndale Park, Wooddale Park)
- Residential grounds (lawns, planters, flower beds, retaining walls, fences, hedges, ornamental trees & shrubbery, walkways, outdoor lighting fixtures, signs, sculpture, gazebos, decks, swimming pools, accessory buildings, and other yard furnishings)
- Streets, curbs, gutters, drains
- Sidewalks & boulevards
- Residential driveways
- Median islands
- Vegetation related to land use (functional & ornamental plantings, boulevard trees, yard trees)
- Gardens
- Public improvements (street lights, street signs, traffic signs)
- Topographic features (including Minnehaha Creek and Mill pond shoreline)

Vogel added that before the survey is completed, it needs to determine which landscapes contribute to the historical significance of the district (and are therefore worthy of protection). Some modifications to the district plan of treatment may also be necessary.

B. Design Review Issues

Consultant Vogel reminded the Board that at the November 5th Workshop the following questions relative to design review were raised:

- 1) How should the heritage landmark overlay zoning treat noncontributing properties located in designated landmark districts? and
- 2) Should Certificates of Appropriateness be required for structural alterations and additions?

1. Noncontributing Properties

Mr. Vogel explained that the physical characteristics and historical significance of the Country Club District as a whole provide the basis for evaluating individual

houses as contributing and noncontributing heritage resources. Contributing properties are those which add to the historical associations and historic architectural qualities for which the district is significant. Noncontributing houses do not add to the historical and architectural values for which the district has been zoned for preservation. Although analysis of the re-survey data is not yet complete, it appears that a very substantial proportion of the houses in the Country Club District meet the criteria for contributing heritage resources.

The comparatively small number of noncontributing residential properties in the district either were not present during the period of significance (i.e., they are less than 50 years old) or no longer possess historic integrity due to major alterations, additions, or other physical changes in their appearance.

By definition, noncontributing properties are not heritage preservation resources because they do not meet the criteria for significance and integrity. Individual houses in the Country Club District either retain integrity (and thereby contribute to the significance of the district) or they do not. Noncontributing houses in the Country Club District are subject to design review by the Heritage Preservation Board when they are demolished or moved because the city code requires the replacement homes to be architecturally compatible with the historic homes and streetscapes of the landmark district.

Vogel observed that in common practice, heritage preservation design review is not concerned with exterior modifications made to noncontributing properties in a district (particularly one where the majority of the components lack individual significance). This is not to say that noncontributing properties are outside the scope of heritage preservation planning—obviously, they form part of the fabric of the district and their physical presence has an impact on its overall character and integrity. Noncontributing properties can even become the focus of preservation treatments: for example, in cases involving properties where historic integrity has been compromised as the result of unsympathetic additions or remodelings, the Secretary of the Interior's Guidelines for the Restoring Historic Properties provide a useful approach for recovering important aspects of historic integrity. In the City of Edina, under the existing codes, changes to the appearance of noncontributing homes in the Country Club District would not require a Certificate of Appropriateness and homeowner compliance with preservation standards would be voluntary.

2. Additions and Alterations

Regarding the issue of reviewing addition and alteration projects, the current City of Edina heritage preservation code does not require Certificates of Appropriateness for exterior alterations or additions on any buildings within a designated heritage landmark district. The primary emphasis of the code is on preventing teardowns of historic (i.e., contributing) properties and applying architectural design standards to new construction. The protection, repair, and replacement of exterior features on historic homes is left to the homeowners.

Vogel pointed out that the cornerstone of the city's preservation program, as it is currently constituted, is the concept of heritage preservation as a partnership between local government and property owners. Sustaining the city's heritage resources for future generations depends on striking a balance between government regulation and private stewardship. As the city expands the Edina Heritage Landmark overlay zoning to other buildings, sites, and districts, the Heritage Preservation Board's responsibilities for design review will also increase. When the current preservation code was adopted, there was a strong consensus among members of the City Council, the Heritage Preservation Board, and the public that the best way to make the benefits of preservation available to the largest number of historic property owners and the community as a whole was to emphasize voluntary compliance with preservation standards (private stewardship) over regulation by means of Certificates of Appropriateness (police power).

Mr. Vogel further stated that the most important threat to the historic integrity of the Country Club District is from teardowns—specifically, the demolition of existing historic homes and the construction of architecturally inappropriate new homes. Demolition, obviously, is the most destructive and irreversible form of activity which can degrade the integrity of a heritage resource. Inappropriately designed new construction can also have significant, long-term negative effects. The data at hand show that historic facades in the district are, by and large, intact—indeed, the overall level of façade preservation in the district is outstanding in comparison with other neighborhoods of similarly-aged homes in the Twin Cities. (I would add that, based on my experience, the level of compliance in the Country Club District is at least as good as that of more intensively regulated historic districts.) Of course, facade “modernization” and the replacement of original architectural features can have significant effects on the neighborhood's historic character. Vogel pointed out that in his professional opinion, the exterior remodeling that has occurred has had minimal adverse effect on the historic character of individual house facades or the neighborhood as a whole—put another way, the loss of historic fabric has not resulted in significant loss of historic character. Most of the egregious “remuddling” seems to have occurred at post-1940 homes, which are inherently more susceptible to loss of historic integrity from exterior alteration than older homes because of their design characteristics and materials. There are also several noteworthy examples of façade remodeling where the new work actually enhances the historic facades by adding architecturally compatible character-defining features.

Addressing additions, Vogel observed that over their lifetimes most of the homes in the district have been added to—one could make the case that the additions more than fifty years old reflect an important aspect of the pattern of residential development in the district. Most of the additions made since the 1950's appear to have been appropriate, in that they did not destroy significant, historic character-defining architectural features. Once again, the most incompatible additions tend to be found on houses built after 1940. Except for a relatively

small handful of large, multi-story additions (most often attached garages) that overpower or dramatically alter the historic character of the house, most of the additions are easily differentiated from the original building and do not compromise the integrity of the façade elements visible from the street.

Although individual homeowners have not always followed preservation standards and guidelines to the letter, with few exceptions they have succeeded in preserving the form and details of their historic house facades without any coercion from the city. In the final analysis, the typical Country Club homeowner has been a good steward of neighborhood heritage.

Vogel explained that the current Plan of Treatment for the district reflects the city's comprehensive, contextual approach to heritage resources management, which recognizes the historical fact that the Country Club is one of the city's historically significant neighborhoods, a heritage resource that derives its primary heritage preservation value from being a unified entity, even though it is composed of over 500 heritage resource components which are not individually significant. Because they lack individual distinction, the preservation of house facades relies heavily upon voluntary compliance with heritage preservation standards. The level of regulation by overlay zoning is, in my opinion, matched to the scale of the primary threats (teardowns) and has been demonstrated to be cost-effective from the perspective of local government operations. Because no form of government regulation of private property is perfect (there will always be "loopholes" and property owners willing to circumvent the official controls), requiring Certificates of Appropriateness for exterior remodeling and small additions would not increase the long-term benefits of heritage landmark zoning for the community at large. In my opinion, it would be better to address the problems posed by inappropriate façade remodeling and out-of-scale additions through more intensive public education focused on historic homeowners, realtors, contractors, architects, designers, and builders.

Consultant Vogel concluded that the heritage landmark code and the political process that shaped it have placed limits on the authority of the Heritage Preservation Board to prescribe any particular preservation treatment outside of demolition and new construction in relation to privately owned property. The Plan of Treatment adopted when the Country Club District was designated an Edina Heritage Landmark establishes priorities for dealing with heritage resource preservation issues within the framework of existing local planning and zoning programs. The plan also presents specific recommendations for meeting these priorities and fairly detailed guidelines with respect to new construction. The challenge here is to adopt a policy that protects significant heritage resources yet also allows private property owners the flexibility to accommodate changing needs without excessive government regulation—it goes without saying that finding this middle ground between guidance and regulation will always be a challenge. Based on the preliminary findings of the re-survey, however, the best course to follow seems to be: continue to guide, rather than regulate, additions and alterations to contributing properties, using the Certificate of Appropriateness

process to control teardowns and developing property owner education programs to encourage voluntary compliance with accepted preservation standards and.

By redefining demolition to encompass the destruction or removal of a major architectural character-defining feature, the city may be able to better protect historic facades with Certificates of Appropriateness under the current code. (It remains to be seen, however, if the legal definition of demolition can be stretched to cover activities which are widely regarded as “remodeling” – the decision ultimately rests with the City Council.) Such design review should apply only to permits for work on contributing properties. Staff feels strongly that the overriding consideration should be protecting the historic elements deemed most critical to defining *neighborhood* character.

While continuing to encourage private stewardship, Vogel recommended that the city should take the steps needed to ensure that historic property owners have access to information, education, and technical assistance in preservation matters. The city also needs to explore ways to provide property owners with economic incentives to invest in state-of-the-art façade rehabilitation and architecturally compatible new construction.

Board members discussed the need to better define the term “demolition”, to ensure that it is clearly understood what building activity would warrant a Certificate of Appropriateness. All agreed that it is imperative the revised plan of treatment clarify the preservation activities overseen in the district.

Member Blemaster opined that the proposed changes cover the level of monitoring very well without stringent controls. She cautioned that it is important to respect peoples’ property.

Member Scherer questioned what would be considered significant changes to the front façade. Mr. Vogel explained that character defining features would be subject to review. All agreed that “character defining features” need to be defined; otherwise the review process could appear arbitrary. Member Rofidal suggested photos of character defining features might be helpful. Board members agreed.

C. Proposed Plan of Treatment Changes

Consultant Vogel provided the Board with proposed revisions to the plan of treatment reflecting direction from the November 5th workshop. Board members agreed that the revisions reflected the discussion at the workshop.

Addressing changes to the landscaping in the district, Mr. Vogel recommended not reviewing those changes because landscaping is reversible - as seen in photos of the homes over the years.

Board members requested that driveways be addressed in the revised plan of treatment. Vogel agreed that would be important, noting that although it appears that currently, a 12 foot wide driveway is required by the zoning code; with the exception of shared driveways and the driveways of new homes, most driveways in the district are less than 10 feet wide, with the average being 8 feet. Discussion ensued regarding how driveways should be addressed. It was agreed that since driveway widths do vary within the neighborhood, a requirement of the driveway being proportionate to the property would be reasonable.

IV. OTHER BUSINESS:

A. Country Club Survey Meeting Schedule

Member Rofidal observed that the Country Club District moratorium ends on April 15th, at which time the survey work and proposed changes need to be presented to the City Council for their approval. Board members discussed a proposed schedule of meetings with the neighborhood and the City Council. It was agreed that a joint meeting with the City Council would be preferable in January to touch base and make sure the Council was aware of the content of revised plan of treatment prior to a neighborhood meeting toward the end of February (perhaps on the 25th). Planner Repya stated that she would check into the possibility of a joint meeting with the City Council in January, prior to a neighborhood meeting in February.

V. CONCERN OF RESIDENTS: None

VI. CORRESPONDENCE:

**VII. NEXT MEETING DATE: December 11, 2007 – Regular Meeting
December 17, 2007 – Special Meeting with
Eden Prairie HPC**

VIII. ADJOURNMENT 9:50 p.m.

**Respectfully submitted,
*Joyce Repya***